

Arizona State Forestry Division

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Governor Proclaims Wildfire Awareness Week

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Governor Napolitano has proclaimed the week of April 21-27, 2008 as **Wildfire Awareness Week** in Arizona. As we move into the spring and summer, we begin the hot and dry part of the year that brings with it a potential increase in the number of wildfires.

The Governor's reminder this year is part of the Fire Wise program: "Do your part, Don't let a Wildfire start." The slogan underscores the fact that everyone in Arizona is a steward of our natural resources, and we are each responsible for preventing fire. "By taking simple steps in preparation for the season, and by practicing awareness, we can do a lot toward reducing the size and severity of the wildfire season this year," said Governor Napolitano.

State Forester Kirk Rowdabaugh added that Arizona's Wildfire Environment has irrevocably changed due to long-term cyclic drought, the effects of global climatic change, and insect and disease outbreaks. As a result, the number of wildland fires continues to increase and as the state continues to grow, we have more people living in what's called the "wildland-urban interface," the area in which cities and towns touch brushlands and forests. "As the threat increases, we are taking the necessary steps to protect the communities that are most vulnerable," said Rowdabaugh. As part of this year's preparation, property owners are encouraged to remove dead vegetation from around their homes and businesses and to participate in wildland fire prevention educational opportunities in their regions of the state.

The Governor, the State Forester and the Wildland Fire Management Agencies offer the following tips to reduce the threat of fire in Arizona:

- Prevention is key. Homeowners need to create and maintain survivable space around their properties keeping grass mowed, thinning vegetation, and pruning back trees and brush.
- For technical assistance – for example, information regarding how much space to clear – owners can contact their local fire department or the nearest State Forestry Office.

- Use extreme care in the use of all fire and potentially fire causing activities whether it be for industrial, home, or recreational use.
- Make sure campfires and smoking materials are extinguished.
- Use spark arrestors in mechanical equipment such as chain saws and off-road vehicles.
- When you pull off a roadway, be sure **not** to park in grassy areas.
- People pulling trailers should also be sure to attach safety chains securely; when these chains are loose and drag on pavement, that can cause sparks which can ignite fires along the roadsides.
- Observe “Red Flag” warnings. Those warnings will be issued by fire agencies when weather conditions are conducive to the easy start and rapid spread of wildfires. During such times, citizens should curtail activities which could cause fire and should obey all fire restrictions and area closures.

By following these steps, Arizonans can help to ensure our state stays free of the devastation of massive wildfire.

For more information please visit www.azstatefire.org or www.azfireinfo.com.

For information concerning fire restrictions call toll free 877-864-6985.

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